

SECOND-HALF PERFORMANCE UPGRADE SPARKS CAVALIER HOMECOMING VICTORY

By Ron Barry

Crockett County head football coach Kevin Ward was not happy with his team's first-half effort in Friday night's homecoming game with Hardin County, despite holding a 21-12 lead but allowing 164 rushing yards.

Ward's mood improved after the second half when his Cavaliers held the visiting Tigers to 67 total yards, picked off two passes, shut them out, and tacked on a couple of touchdowns themselves to win 35-12.

"We were a much better football team in the second half," Ward said. "We tackled better, we blocked better, we executed our responsibilities much better instead of worrying about someone else's. With Haywood coming up next, we can't start out the same way we did in the first half tonight."

Ward pointed out to his team that the Tomcats - the region's gold standard team for the past few years - will be coming into Cavalier Stadium fresh off their first loss, a non-region 41-20 thumping by undefeated Covington.

"They're going to be hacked off when they get here," Ward said, "so we better be ready to go from the opening kick. They have size in the line, tremendous players in the skill positions, and two great quarterbacks that can both play. We'll have to see where we are injury-wise and how we have to move some people."

The Cavs have been without lineman Zerafin Guardian for three games now and added lineman Colton Mayo to the list in the Hardin County contest.

While Ward touted the second-half play of his team Friday night, two guys definitely were ready for the opening bell. Running back DK Woods put on another bullish show against the Tigers, running for two first-half scores with 79 yards on 11 carries and gaining 20 more yards on his only pass reception. Kickoff return specialist Demo Pickens ran one all the way back for the second straight game, this time covering 90 yards to the end zone to give Crockett its 21-12 halftime edge.

Defensively, however, the Cavs allowed Hardin County to drive 91 yards in 17 plays - taking 9:20 off the first-quarter clock - for a touchdown on its opening possession. The visitors missed the extra point, and - with their tally sandwiched by two four-yard scoring runs by Woods - trailed 14-6.

But then Crockett allowed a 70-yard touchdown scamper by Jacob Saunders, but held a 14-12 edge when the extra point was again missed.

Pickens gathered in the ensuing kickoff at his 10, turned toward the middle, cut to the right, and zipped 90 yards without being touched. Avery Hurst booted the third of his five extra points on the night, and the Cavs led 21-12 at the intermission.

Following a halftime break that included an outstanding performance of the entire "Glitch" show by the Marching Cavaliers Band and a fireworks show from the north side of the campus, Crockett's defense returned to the field with a vengeance and stopped a fourth-and-one play at the Hardin County 37. A pair of 12-yard runs by Woods moved the hosts to the five, but a fumbled exchange and an incomplete pass forced a field goal attempt.

Hurst lined up from 28 yards out, but the snap sailed well over the arms of holder Kris Phillips and Hurst had no choice but to fall on it for a 26-yard loss, ending the threat.

Crockett then stopped another fourth-down Tiger play, breaking up a pass at midfield. A pass interference call on a third-down play kept the Cavs' 50-yard drive going, and quarterback Ben Burgess hit tight end Dre Walker with a four-yard scoring pass with 8:29 remaining in the game. Hurst's extra put the Cavs up 28-12.

On the next Hardin County play from scrimmage - a pass about 20 yards downfield - safety Amarion Hobson nailed the intended receiver just as the ball reached him. Cav linebacker Jake Knox intercepted the deflected ball, igniting Crockett's final scoring drive.

Burgess connected with wideout Deuce Greenhill down the left sideline for 33 yards and then chopped off 17 more yards with a toss to Walker, down to the Tiger four. Gabe Dupree ran it into the end zone from there with 7:35 to go, and Hurst made it 35-12. Dupree later intercepted another Aidan Coleman pass on the game's final play to wrap up the homecoming triumph and improve the Cavs' record to 6-2 on the season.

Woods finished with 128 yards on 20 carries; Walker caught four passes for 65 yards and a score; and Burgess was eight-of-13 passing for 120 yards to head the Crockett statistical categories.

Final Statistics

Rushes-Yards: CC - DK Woods 20-128, Demo Pickens 2-20, Gabe Dupree 4-18, Dre Walker 2-5, Ben Burgess 8-2, Bad Snap 1-(-26), Team 37-147. **HC** - Jacob Saunders 15-133, Aidan Coleman 16-45, Zach Ingle 1-3, Carter Pigg 1-2, Team 33-183.

Passing (Comp-Att-Yds-Int): CC - Burgess 8-13-120-0. **HC** - Coleman 6-17-69-2.

Receptions-Yards: CC - Dre Walker 4-65-1 TD, Deuce Greenhill 2-28, DK Woods 1-20, Squirt Pickens 1-7. **HC** - Saunders 1-25, Thomas Stokke 1-21, Lamarion Wyke 2-16, Maddox Ruddle 1-7, Ingle 1-0.

Interceptions: CC - Jake Knox 1-10, Gabe Dupree 1-0. **HC** - None.

Kickoff Returns-Yards: CC - Demo Pickens 3-146-1 TD. **HC** - Wyke 5-100. **Punt Returns-Yards: CC** - None. **HC** - None.

Total Scrimmage Plays-Yards: CC 50-267, **HC** 50-252.

First Downs: CC 16, HC 8.

Fumbles-Lost: CC 2-0, HC 2-0.

Penalties-Yards: CC 5-40, HC 6-53.

Punts-Yards: CC - None. **HC** - Brandon Williamson 1-34-34.0.

Points (TD-2PC-XP-FG-P): Woods 2-0-0-0-12, **Demo Pickens** 1-0-0-0-6, **Dre Walker** 1-0-0-0-6, **Dupree** 1-0-0-0-6, **Avery Hurst** 0-0-5-0-5, **Team** 5-0-5-0-35. **HC** - 2-0-0-0-12.

Below: Crockett County's second-half defensive effort was stellar in the homecoming win. Here's a good example of how they did it, when Hardin County quarterback Aidan Coleman kept the ball on an option play and was immediately locked up by Jake Knox (35), DK Woods (32), and Amari Hobson (4), with another wave of Cavaliers about to arrive in support: Dre Walker (6), Gabe Dupree (29), Nolen Turner (54), and Brooks Harris (73). (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: ... and took it 90 yards to the house to put Crockett up 21-12 by the halftime break. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Season Statistics (Record: 6-2; Region 1-1)

Rushes-Yards: CC - DK Woods 125-764, Deuce Greenhill 35-360, Gabe Dupree 23-83, Demo Pickens 13-76, Amari Hobson 7-13, Dre Walker 4-14, DJ Forrest 2-0, Bad Snap 1-(-26), Ben Burgess 61-(-31), **Team** 271-1,253. **Opponents** 285-1,450.

Passing (Comp-Att-Yds-Int): CC - Burgess 60-106-1,005-5. **Opponents** 61-117-732-11.

Receptions-Yards: CC - Greenhill 20-443-3 TD, Dre Walker 19-363-2 TD, Demo Pickens 11-127-2 TD, DK Woods 4-34, Squirt Pickens 2-17, Karsen Burgess 1-8, Brody Parlow 1-7, Dupree 1-4, Amari Hobson 1-2, **Team** 60-1,005. **Opponents** 61-732.

Interceptions: CC - Demo Pickens 3-49, Dupree 2-55-1 TD, Woods 1-12, Walker 1-10, Jake Knox 1-10, Randle Perry 1-8, Greenhill 1-0, Ian Greenberg 1-0, **Team** 11-144-1 TD. **Opponents** 5-106-1 TD.

Kickoff Returns-Yards: CC - Demo Pickens 13-440-2 TD, Squirt Pickens 6-114, Luke Beaird 1-8, **Team** 20-562-2 TD. **Opponents** 22-539-1 TD.

Punt Returns-Yards: CC - Demo Pickens 7-103, **Team** 7-103. **Opponents** 8-77.

Total Scrimmage Plays-Yards: CC 375-2,258. **Opponents** 403-2,182.

First Downs: CC 79, Opponents 89.

Fumbles-Lost: CC 15-4, Opponents 23-9.

Penalties-Yards: CC 38-292, Opponents 59-441.

Punts-Yards: CC - Avery Hurst 17-652-38.4. **Opponents** 23-782-34.0.

Points (TD-2PC-XP-FG-P): Woods 13-0-0-0-78, **Greenhill** 7-0-0-0-42, **Hurst** 0-0-25-2-31, **Demo Pickens** 4-0-0-0-24, **Walker** 2-1-0-0-14, **Burgess** 2-0-0-0-12, **Dupree** 1-0-0-0-6, **Team** 29-1-25-2-207. **Opponents** 16-3-5-3-116.



Above: Two Cavaliers specifically stood out offensively. DK Woods scored a pair of first-half touchdowns and ran for 128 yards overall; he's shown here in the end zone after his second score ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: ... and kick returner Demo Pickens (3), who took this boot at his own 10, cut to the middle, and then back out to the right ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... found a more open lane out to his right, ... (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: The now traditional Melanie Meza pregame pose involved some additional homecoming creativity, as her cheer friends became a mattress and Zoey Burleson points the way to a healthy sleep. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Reigning as Homecoming Queen is Rachel Jordan, flanked by her parents Ashley and Caren Jordan. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: A "glowing" Gareth Rawson leads the Cavaliers onto the field, led by the front-row contingent of Austin Carroll (56), Kris Phillips (16), Carson Bridger (79), Joshua Simmons (78), and Colton Mayo (52). (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: One Crockett family had the unusual distinction of providing two members to the homecoming court: Addie Hoover was a freshman representative and Sadie Hoover was a senior rep. They're escorted by John and Judy Hoover. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: This week's cheer sign prophetically described the second-half defensive effort. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Saluted at the end of the first quarter were Crockett County elementary school students who have achieved their reading goals through the Save the Children initiative, and there were so many ... (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: ... that it takes two wide-shot photos to get them all in. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: ... and a robust fireworks display, conducted from the north side of the CCHS campus. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Avery Hurst (85) -- kicking out of the hold of Kris Phillips (16) -- was his usual dependable self, connecting successfully on all five of his extra point attempts. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: There were two halftime highlights: a tremendous performance by the Marching Cavaliers Band, led by Commander Faith Mentink, ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Amarian Hobson (4) timed his hit on this Hardin County receiver just right, knocking the ball into the air ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: ... just as linebacker Jake Knox (35) arrives from the backside of the play to make his first interception of the season. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: In this week's edition of "How many tacklers does it take to get DK Woods onto the ground?", no fewer than seven Tigers are trying it on this play -- and Woods still isn't down. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Gabe Dupree (29) cuts between strong blocks by Dre Walker (6), Austin Carroll (56), Randle Perry (50), and Brooks Harris (73) to score the Cavaliers' final touchdown of the night. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Randle Perry (50) and Jake Knox (35) give a final welcome to Crockett County to Tiger quarterback Aidan Coleman in the fourth quarter. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Representative of the "GLOW" theme from the Cavalier Crazies throughout the night are Macy Hazlewood and Karlee Castellaw, here applauding the pregame introduction of Crockett football legend Johnny Jones. (Photo by Ron Barry)

